

**Washington, DC** – U.S. Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) participated in a strategic defense exercise, known as *Deadly Venture*, designed to help federal officials prepare for national crises.

The exercise earlier this week was sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and organized by the Center for Applied Strategic Learning of the Institute for National Strategic Studies at National Defense University. The purpose was to stimulate discussion among policy makers about the homeland security implications of illicit drug trafficking, transnational criminal activity and terrorism, with a specific focus on the Latin American region and the U.S.-Mexico border.

Participants also looked at the various strategy and policy options available to the United States in response to narco-terrorism in the Western Hemisphere.

“The 23<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District is, in many ways, on the frontlines of our national security,” Congressman Rodriguez said. “I represent a significant portion of the U.S.-Mexico border and that presents challenges when it comes to illegal trafficking and activity. Partnering and participating in these exercises helps me and my colleagues to be much better prepared in the event of future crisis situations.”

As a participant, Congressman Rodriguez stressed the need for greater coordination of intelligence on federal, state and local levels, where “boots on the ground” are critical to obtaining intelligence and battling violence. And when it comes to combating drug violence, the fight has two fronts: supply and demand.

“Going after drug kingpins and traffickers has to be done swiftly, and we also have to attack the problem of demand within our borders,” Congressman Rodriguez said.

The *Deadly Venture* exercise brought together senior level officials from the Executive and Legislative Branches who were told they comprised a “special committee” convened by the President to provide policy recommendations and advice on an unfolding national crisis. The scenario was introduced with a network quality simulated news report, and participants were given short briefings on relevant topics. They then took that information and initiated discussions about how to best address the crisis.

Christine Wormuth, Principal Deputy Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas’ Security Affairs, opened the event and said such exercises like *Deadly Venture* have real-world value. For example, a May 2008 exercise called *Partnered Response* took place shortly before the international flu pandemic response with Mexico.

“The topic of narco-terrorism violence is a serious issue that represents a very real concern for the United States,” Wormuth said. “Any critical observations and recommendations from today could prove valuable down the road and anytime we are able to get members of Congress and the interagency together to address national security issues is a good day.”

There are five exercises per year that address current and near-future homeland and national security issues, such as national energy security, cyber security, agricultural bioterrorism and regional security in areas like China or the Middle East.

Congressman Rodriguez sits on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security. He represents one of the most geographically expansive Congressional Districts in the nation, with 11 counties directly on the border and 9 inland counties. There are 785 miles of border in the district and seven border crossings in the District. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, he has led efforts to secure millions in grant and appropriations funding to combat violence and illegal activity along the border.

###